

Description of the work of a Volunteer Befriender for Ups and Downs Southwest

The Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteer Befriender Project is a scheme in which volunteers offer regular support, friendship and practical help to families where there is a child with Down Syndrome. Families will access this service at times of additional need in terms of managing the complexities of a Down Syndrome diagnosis and potential impact on family life.

The work of the volunteer befriender requires a high level of commitment and reliability and will be supported by the Ups and Downs Southwest Family Support Team.

**Purposes of the work**:

Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteers Befrienders are expected to work towards the increased confidence and independence of the family by:

* offering support, friendship and practical help
* visiting the families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
* reassuring families that challenges in bringing up children are not unusual
* emphasising the positive aspects of family life
* developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and an understanding developed
* encouraging parents’ strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
* encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available in the community

**Responsible to:**

* the Ups and Downs Southwest Family Support team who are in turn responsible to the Director.

**Hours of commitment**:

* initial foundation course lasting approx. 8 hours over 2 weeks
* 2 – 3 hours per week visiting time according to family’s needs
* regular support/supervision
* ideally a commitment of one year initially

**Duties:**

* to be familiar with and committed to the Ups and Downs Southwest ethos
* to understand and implement Ups and Downs Southwest policies on confidentiality, equality and diversity, safeguarding children, health and safety and data protection
* to be introduced to and support a family by visiting them at home
* to share information with your allocated family support worker and contact them immediately if there is concern about the physical or emotional well-being of any member of the family
* to take part in reviews with the family and family support worker as requested
* to keep records of visits to families as requested by the family support worker
* to attend support, supervision and training sessions
* to submit regular expense claims to be paid at the agreed rate by the board of trustees.

This is exciting and rewarding voluntary work that requires energy, commitment, reliability, creativity and a sense of humour. All volunteers can expect the support of the family support team, the Director, other volunteers and the Trustee Board. There are also opportunities for self-development and social contact with others in Ups and Downs Southwest.

**Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteer Befrienders should:**

* have a child who has Down Syndrome (similar conditions/experience will be considered)
* have a positive attitude to working with people of any gender, family status, sexual identity, any ethnic origin, culture or religion and all disabilities
* demonstrate a sensitive and caring attitude towards others
* have a non-judgemental attitude
* be clear about confidentiality and when a confidence remains so, but be able to decide when disclosure of a confidence is essential to the well-being of a child
* understand the importance of reliability
* have good communication skills including an ability to listen
* understand the need for support
* have a warm and open personality and a sense of humour
* have time and enthusiasm for Ups and Downs Southwest
* be able to work as a member of a team
* be prepared to keep records as requested by the service